

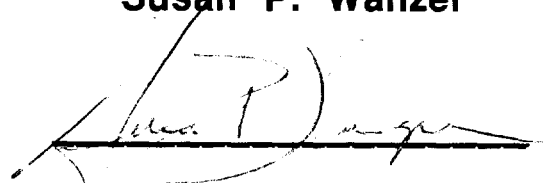
Volunteering/Community Service:
The Relationship to
Academic Fields
A Guide For Students

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan P. Wanzer", is written over a horizontal line.

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Purpose of Thesis

The purpose of this handbook is to help students connect volunteer experiences with academic learning. After being involved with Student Voluntary Services, I recognized a need for students to understand how volunteering and community service projects can benefit them academically. The handbook includes some thoughts on volunteering from a variety of experts, an explanation of the benefits and educational value of volunteering, and responses from students whom I interviewed regarding their volunteer experiences. The last section is a guide, listing each major field offered at Ball State with ideas for related volunteer activities and programs. I hope that this handbook can be used as a resource for students who are interested in participating in volunteer projects.

VOLUNTEERING...

...is a prescription for mental health (Robert L. Payton).

...is "the highlight of my week!" (Ball State student).

...is advocating and empowering, cooperating in mutual dependence and assistance (Brian O'Connell).

...is altruistic (Robert L. Payton).

...is education for life (Arthur Levine).

...is "the book of experience" (Ball State student).

...is a way to improve community and social life (Robert L. Payton).

..."can change a person's attitudes and views on life" (Ball State student).

...is a response to current events, social problems, and community needs that volunteers are often the first to identify (Susan J. Ellis and Katherine H. Noyes).

...increases student involvement in learning (National Institute of Education).

..."gives me a feeling of worth and significance" (Ball State student).

..."It is... the spirit of service that will give a college a place in the public annals of the nation" (Woodrow Wilson).

...involves exploring, experimenting, sustaining, and comforting (Susan J. Ellis & Katherine H. Noyes).

Educational Value of Volunteering

In the 1980's, college students were often referred to as the "me" generation. There has been a common perception that the college students of today are only concerned about learning a specific skill in order to make as much money as possible after graduation. Arthur Levine says that students are more career-oriented and narcissistic, causing an increase in individual ascendancy and a decrease in community ascendancy (1). According to Ernest Boyer, colleges tend to stress careers too much and voluntarism too little (2). He and many other experts in higher education feel that service is a vital part of undergraduate education.

However, students, faculty, and administrators are starting to realize the importance of "outside of the classroom" or "hands-on" learning. Today, a larger percentage of the population is involved in volunteering than ever before (3). Hopefully, by encouraging students to get involved and develop an appreciation of volunteering and community service, these same students will continue to give their time and energy to helping others throughout their lives. O'Connell describes the importance of voluntarism to our nation: "Through our voluntary initiative and independent institutions, ever more Americans worship freely, study quietly, are cared for compassionately, experiment creatively, and contribute generously. These national traits are constantly beautiful and, hopefully, will remain beautifully constant" (4).

Benefits of Volunteering

There are many benefits associated with volunteering - not only for the individuals being helped, but also for the volunteers themselves. By volunteering, students can enhance both their personal and academic growth. The Student Voluntary Services Directory lists these ways that volunteering helps students: exploring careers, practicing specific skills, testing out ideas, gaining practical work experience, strengthening interpersonal skills, and relating to members of other cultures, backgrounds, and ages.

Payton says that volunteering helps students better understand economic and social class relations (5). Boyer points out that volunteering introduces students to new people and new ideas, fosters responsibility, and helps them understand the relationship between "what they learn and how they live".

There are also some very practical, personal benefits of volunteering. These experiences can help students prepare for the job market, learn new skills, overcome boredom, and gain experience to be used on a resume (6). Most importantly, though, volunteers benefit by the self-esteem, self-confidence, and wonderful feelings that come from being needed and really helping someone.

Students at Ball State have found that their volunteer experiences are often very helpful in making decisions about their academic majors or careers. The impact of volunteering has caused some students to add or change majors, while for others, it has helped reinforce their

academic and career plans. The following comments illustrate the impact of volunteering on academic and career decisions:

"I decided to choose a minor in Counseling Psychology because the communications class I had in Social Work did not prepare me well enough...when I volunteered at Youth Service Bureau, I realized that."

"I'm beginning to rethink my career choices. SVS and volunteering has helped."

"I was an undecided major and SVS and volunteering helped me decide to do Social Work...and I have never regretted it!"

"My volunteer experiences helped reinforce the fact that I had made a good choice in my major. It helped me 'test the water', so to speak."

It "has given me second thoughts (about my career plans)."

"My time at Hillcroft reinforced the fact that I wanted to be a special education teacher because I saw the kinds of kids I would be helping."

"I was thinking of going into special education, but after volunteering at Isanogel, I realized it was something I wanted to do only part-time."

"After I started volunteering at the Muncie Homeless Shelter, I realized that I wanted to get into a career in which I would be able to help people in various situations. I switched my major from Elementary Education to Social Work."

When asked what they felt was the most important thing they had learned from volunteering, these students said:

"I have learned not to judge others because each person is a unique individual and has had various experiences which have brought him/her to the place where he/she is now."

"(I learned) how much one person can affect other people, especially children. It's a great feeling to think you've helped someone."

"The simple act of giving one hour of time per week is so appreciated by the receiving end, and it gives me a feeling of worth and significance."

"(I learned) to value people and take each person as an individual."

"Volunteers can change a person's attitude and views on life."

"I can work as an important part of a group and make a difference!"

"(I have learned) how to interact with other people, how to be responsible and organized, and not to judge others because of abilities or socioeconomic level."

"I learned to look at everyone equally."

"(I learned) how lucky I am to have a house, a family, and people who love me."

"(I learned) to be thankful for what we have."

"We can make a difference in someone's life; whether that person be mentally or physically handicapped, or even just lonely."

Relating Volunteering/Community Service to your Academic Field

As we can understand from the previous information, volunteering can be a very important learning experience. It is important to remember that any time you volunteer, you are helping someone, advancing a cause, or contributing to an organization. Even if the tasks you perform do not apply directly to your major or future career, the skills you learn by working with people or helping achieve a goal will be beneficial to you in your overall educational and personal growth. The benefits of volunteering can help you become a more caring, responsible person - the kind of person needed to help our nation run effectively. Many colleges and universities strive to instill a sense of citizenship in their graduates; volunteering helps students become good citizens.

It is also important to remember that even if you are not directly involved with the individuals being helped by the agency, you can still learn a great deal about the agency, its clients, and your own abilities. Some agencies need volunteers to answer telephones, work on promotions and advertising, and perform tasks which support the efficient operation of any organization or office. These are also valuable contributions you can make.

However, there are particular types of volunteer activities which do correspond well to various academic fields. This handbook includes a guide listing each major offered at Ball State University, the kinds of volunteer experiences which would be well-suited to these majors, and some local and/or national agencies or organizations which could benefit from the skills of students in each individual major.

College of Applied Sciences and Technology

Home Economics

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- soup kitchens
- food pantries
- menu planning for nursing homes and hospitals
- mending clothes
- teaching sewing courses
- teaching living skills to teenagers and adults
- nutrition advising for low income or elderly programs

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Meals on Wheels
- Ball Memorial Hospital - Menu Marker
- Parkview Nursing Center - Clothes Mender
- Open Door Community Services - WIC child care volunteer
- Cambridge House Independent Living Skills

Industry & Technology

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- helping children with educational exercises (i.e. drafting, printing, electricity)
- teach or assist in courses at job training centers for adults
- direct work with drafting and planning

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Career Development Center - Evaluation Aide
- Muncie Boys & Girls Club - vocational education tutor

Other Organizations/Agencies:

- Habitat for Humanity

Nursing

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- hospitals
- nursing homes
- blood banks/blood drives
- health education/care
- blood pressure monitoring

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Ball Memorial - various positions
- Ball Memorial Blood Bank - assistant
- Westminster Village
- adult day care programs
- child care centers
- community centers
- county health agencies
- any hospital or nursing home position

Physical Education

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- physical therapy assistance
- lead exercise classes
- plan and supervise recreation programs for children, adults, or the elderly at a variety of agencies
- work with the physically handicapped

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Handicapped Swim
- Isanogel Center
- Hillcroft Center - Special Olympics coach
- Knightstown Children's Home
- Parkview Nursing Center

College of Architecture and Planning

Architecture & Environmental Design **Landscape Architecture** **Urban Planning**

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- home building and planning assistance
- volunteer service for environmental groups
- help children at children's homes or elderly people at nursing homes plant flower or vegetable gardens and teach them how to care for the gardens
- give tours at nature centers in parks

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Muncie Health Care Center - gardening, etc.
- Community Development Office - research & development intern

Other Organizations/Agencies:

- Habitat for Humanity
- Greenpeace - volunteer
- Environmental Action Coalition - volunteer
- any environmental or housing organization that needs volunteers

College of Business

Accounting **Finance** **Economics**

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- any agency - volunteer office help
- assistance with bookkeeping for a social services agency
- teach teenagers or adults money management skills
- help run fund raising campaigns for agencies
- tax assistance programs for the elderly

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Cambridge House - Independent Living Skills
- Open Door Community Services
- Salvation Army - receptionist
- any agency that needs office help
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program - tax assistance
- United Way - fund raising

Business Education / Office Administration
Management Science
Marketing

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- volunteer office assistance for agencies - typing, filing, answering phones
- help run fund raising campaigns for agencies
- public relations
- manage or supervise other volunteers at an agency
- teach basic business skills to teens or adults

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Career Development Center
- Christian Ministries of Delaware County
- United Way
- Salvation Army
- agencies that need office help

College of Fine Arts

Art

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- art & craft classes for children, elderly, or handicapped groups
- give tours of museum or gallery exhibits
- art therapy

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Indiana Women's Prison
- Muncie Children's Museum - volunteer docent
- Indianapolis Children's Museum
- Westminster Village Health Center - art instructor
- hospitals

Music

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- lead songs, etc. as part of a musical recreation program at children's homes, nursing homes, hospitals, etc.
- direct a choir group
- organize talent shows at agencies

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- The Woodlands - music volunteer
- Muncie Health Care Center
- Muncie Boys & Girls Club

Theatre

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- perform skits, plays, etc. at children's homes, nursing homes, or hospitals
- help children develop acting skills
- organize talent shows at agencies

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Rolling Hills Convalescent Center - entertainment volunteer
- Muncie Children's Museum
- Muncie Boys and Girls Club
- community centers

College of Sciences & Humanities

Anthropology

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- give tours of museum exhibits
- build/refurbish museum exhibits

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Muncie Children's Museum - volunteer docent
- Indianapolis Children's Museum

Other Organizations/Agencies:

- Minnetrista Cultural Center

Biology **Chemistry**

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- assist with blood drives
- volunteer lab work at a hospital or research center
- work with animals

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Ball Memorial Blood Bank
- Muncie Humane Society - adoption counselor
- Me's Zoo
- Open Door

Computer Science

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- data entry, etc. for an agency
- teach children basic computer skills
- play computer games with children

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Aquarius House - computer operator
- Muncie Career Center
- adult literacy programs

Criminal Justice / Criminology

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- visit prisoners and juvenile offenders
- work with victims of domestic violence
- rape counseling

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Pendleton Reformatory
- Indiana Women's Prison
- A Better Way
- Victim Advocate Program
- Indiana Boys School
- Indiana Girls School

English

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- tutor adults and children in reading and writing skills
- write letters for elderly or handicapped individuals
- produce promotional materials - agency brochures and other literature
- advertising

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Muncie Mission - GED tutor
- Muncie Community Schools Adult Literacy - Project Read tutor
- Muncie Health Care Center - letter writer
- any agency needing writing or copy assistance

Foreign Languages

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- tutoring children or adults in foreign languages
- office assistance at agencies that serve clients who speak a different language

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Cultural Sharing Partner

Geography
Geology
History

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- tutoring children or adults
- give tours of museum exhibits and historic sites
- office assistance at historical societies

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Muncie Children's Museum - volunteer docent
- Indianapolis Children's Museum
- Muncie Mission - GED tutor
- Parkview Nursing Center - Trivia Time leader

Other Organizations/Agencies:

- Minnetrista Cultural Center
- Indiana Historical Society
- Delaware County Historical Alliance

Journalism

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- produce or assist with agency newsletters
- tutor adults or children in writing and reading skills

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Ball Memorial Hospital Skilled Care Center - recreation assistant
- Muncie Community Schools Adult Education - Project Read tutor
- Area VI Council on Aging - special events assistant

Mathematical Sciences

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- tutor children or adults in math
- volunteer bookkeeping for agencies

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Muncie Mission - GED tutor
- Youth Service Bureau - tutor/recreational leader
- Muncie Career Center

Natural Resources

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- volunteer for environmental organization - research, fund raising, public relations, etc.
- give tours at nature centers in parks
- help children or elderly people plant trees or gardens and teach them how to care for the plants
- help run recycling programs

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Muncie Health Care Center - gardening, etc.

Other Organizations/Agencies:

- Greenpeace
- Citizens Action Coalition
- Sierra Club
- any environmental or public service organization that needs volunteers

Philosophy

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- work at missions or homeless shelters
- teach religious education classes

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- teach Sunday School
- work for or against important issues - world hunger, freedom of choice, etc.

Physics/Astronomy

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- guide tours of planetariums
- tutor children or adults in science or math

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Youth Service Bureau - tutor/recreational leader
- Muncie Mission - GED tutor

Physiology/Health Science

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- health care agencies - nursing homes, hospitals, etc.
- assist with health education programs
- drug & alcohol counseling
- AIDS education

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Ball Memorial Hospital
- Anderson Health Care
- Aquarius House
- Ball State Health Education Division - peer educator, program assistant
- Delaware County AIDS Task Force
- Planned Parenthood
- Open Door

Political Science

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- political campaign assistance
- help provide transportation, etc. on election days
- fund raising for agencies
- help represent needy persons in the legal process
- any positions in social service agencies
- public interest activism -volunteer to lobby for important causes

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- A Better Way - social service assistant
- UNICEF - fund raiser
- Victim Advocate Program

Other Organizations/Agencies:

- CASA - Court-Appointed Special Advocate Program
- American Civil Liberties Union
- Amnesty International
- political organizations

Psychology

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- work with individuals who have psychiatric problems
- volunteer at children's homes, nursing homes, hospitals

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Marion VA Medical Center
- Indiana Boy's School
- Tri-County Mental Health, Inc.
- Mental Health Association of Delaware County, Inc.
- Richmond State Hospital

Social Work Sociology

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- almost any type of volunteer activity or agency: working with community, corrections, elderly, handicapped, crisis, education/literacy, health care/medical, mental health, recreation, or youth programs

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- almost any program offered through SVS will be helpful experience for a social work or sociology major

Speech Communication

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- fund raising for agencies
- public relations for agencies
- guide tours at museums
- interacting with individuals at any type of agency

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Ball Memorial Hospital
- Marion VA Medical Center
- American Red Cross
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Muncie Children's Museum - volunteer docent

Other Organizations/Agencies:

- Minnetrista Cultural Center

Speech Pathology & Audiology

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- volunteer at speech or hearing clinics
- work with children or adults who have speech or hearing problems

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Indiana School for the Deaf

Telecommunications

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- help with movie nights or other entertainment at children's homes, nursing homes, etc.
- help produce a video for an agency

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- Parkview Nursing Center - movie projectionist

Teachers College

Elementary Education **Special Education** **Secondary Education**

Types of Volunteer Activities and Agencies:

- tutor children, teenagers, or adults in a variety of subjects
- volunteer at day care centers or children's homes
- work with physically or mentally handicapped children and adults
- volunteer at correctional facilities for teenagers

Examples of Related Programs and Positions available through Student Voluntary Services:

- United Day Care
- Indiana School for the Deaf
- Garfield Elementary - staff assistant
- Hillcroft Center
- Youth Service Bureau
- Cambridge House
- Muncie Boys & Girls Club

Summary

Volunteering and community service are very important to our society and can be beneficial as learning experiences. This experience can help students make decisions about academic majors and careers, as well as helping them gain other practical and personal benefits. College and university faculty and administrators are beginning to realize the importance of volunteering and are giving stronger support to student volunteer programs. This handbook provides ideas for students who would like to do volunteer work that relates to their majors. We need to remember that we all have useful skills that can help others. Any volunteer position will be a learning experience for a future career because volunteering and community service relate to life.

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